DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 277 950 CG 019 632

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TITLE "Nobody Told Me It Was Rape": A Parent's Guide for Talking with Teenagers about Acquaintance Rape and Sexual Exploitation.
REPORT NO ISBN-0-941816-13-3
PUB DATE 84
NOTE 30p.
AVAILABLE FROM Network Publications, 1700 Mission St., Suite 203, P.O. Box 1830, Santa Cruz, CA 95061-1830.
PUB TYPE Guides - General (050)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescents; *High Risk Persons; Mass Media Effects; *Parent Child Relationship; *Parent Materials; Parent Role; *Prevention; Rape; Sex Stereotypes; *Sexual Abuse
IDENTIFIERS *Acquaintance Rape

ABSTRACT

This book was written to help parents talk to their adolescent children about acquaintance rape and sexual exploitation. It may also be useful to family life educators presenting units on rape and sexual exploitation. Acquaintance rape and sexual exploitation are explained in the first section. The second section discusses talking with teenagers by examining how to get started, what to say, what constitutes consent, and how to use examples. Several prevention ideas are suggested in the third section. The fourth section looks at messages from the media. The fifth section describes teenagers at risk for acquaintance rape and sexual assault. The final section on recovery information lists 10 steps parents can use to help their teenager who has been a victim of acquaintance rape or sexual assault. (NB)

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NOBODY TOLD ME IT WAS RAPE

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A Parent's Guide for Talking with Teenagers About Acquaintance Rape and Sexual Exploitation

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"NOBODY TOLD ME IT WAS RAPE"

A Parent's Guide for Talking With Teenagers
About Acquaintance Rape and Sexual Exploitation

by
Caren Adams and Jennifer Fay

Network Publications, Santa Cruz, 1984

The authors wish to thank Jan Loreen-Martin for her valuable collaboration in the writing of this booklet.

Also, thanks go to Billie Jo Flerchinger, Wileen Toperosky, Julia Boyd, Millie Mullarky, Beth Reis, Scott Dills, Karen Hausrath, Herb Sanborn and Robbie Bab for their helpful suggestions and support.

A special thanks to the parents who shared their stories and concerns.

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Network Publications, a division of ETR Associates
1700 Mission Street, Suite 203
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
(408) 429-9822

ISBN 0-941816-13-3

The authors and Jan Loreen-Martin have also written a larger work for parents on the same subject entitled NO IS NOT ENOUGH. Their book offers more practical strategies and information about acquaintance rape and sexual exploitation.
For further information contact Impact Publishers, PO. Box 1094, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406.

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INTRODUCTION
A MOTHER'S STORY

When I was about 16, I went out on a date with a guy I knew from school. We went to the movies and afterwards he wanted to go for a ride. There was still time before I was supposed to be home, so I agreed.

He drove into the country singing with the radio. He pulled a beer out from under the car seat and started drinking it. He offered it to me. I said, "No thanks." I was sort of surprised, but didn't want to make a big deal of it. Suddenly he turned down a small dirt road and stopped. He turned to me and pulled me over to him. I didn't know what to say and he acted like it didn't matter anyway. I tried to pull away from him but he wouldn't let me. Then I got scared and said, "What are you doing?"

He said, "What do you think I'm doing? You wouldn't have come here with me if you didn't want it."

I started for the car door but he grabbed my arm so tightly it really hurt. I was afraid he would hurt me even more if I didn't do what he said. He raped me and then drove me home.

I didn't tell anybody because I was too ashamed. My parents had told me not to talk to strangers and to never let a guy take advantage of me. Nobody had told me it was rape if you knew the guy.

I tried to forget about it. But then when I had children, I wanted to be sure nothing like that would ever happen to them. I've talked to them since they were little about someone older touching them. But now as they are approaching the age when they want to date, I know I need to say more. I can't tell them not to date, and I don't want them to feel like it's their fault if something does happen to them. But I'm not sure what to say.

Although assaults like this one are not unusual, we don't hear about them. Most victims are ashamed and don't tell anyone. But as information about sexual assault becomes known and more people start to talk about it, we begin to realize it happens all too often. Even conservative estimates are overwhelming. At least one in four female children and one in ten male children will be sexually assaulted before age eighteen. And most teenagers are assaulted by people they know, family members, or people their own age.

Sexual assault is hard to talk about. It's hard because information about acquaintance rape and other sexual assaults and how they happen is not readily available. It's hard because talking to teens about rape may raise sexual issues that are tough for most parents to talk about. It's hard because we're afraid we'll cause kids to unfairly mistrust others. It's hard because we're afraid we'll give teens mistaken ideas about sex, or put ideas into their heads. It's hard because most parents are embarrased to bring up the subject, and most teens are embarassed to talk about it.

But the only way we can help teens avoid sexual assault is to be sure they know how it happens and who might be involved. The only way they will get this information is from parents. No one else is likely to be able to talk to teens about a subject this sensitive. And no one else can provide the information in a way which is consistent with family values.

ACQUAINTANCE RAPE AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION:
WHAT REALLY HAPPENS

The word rape brings to mind images of teenagers being violently attacked while hitchhiking or walking city streets late at night. It's hard to imagine anyone who's violently attacked preventing the assault. But, the great majority of sexual assaults of teenagers don't happen that way. Teens are most likely to be sexually assaulted by an acquaintance—at home, at a friend's home or in a car.

The full extent of acquaintance rape and sexual exploitation is not known. Even acquaintance rape with obvious force is rarely reported. Assaults achieved through deception or trickery are even less likely to be talked about, and least likely to be reported to the authorities or anyone else.

The likelihood of teens telling they have been raped is small. Most feel they won't be believed or taken seriously, or fear they will get into trouble or be blamed. Many are not sure what happened to them and question whether it is rape if they consented to be with the person who raped them.

WHO

The hardest part for teens to understand is that the person who may victimize them is most often someone they know. Every teen is convinced that all they need to do is look out for the crazy guy or the weirdo. And teens are sure that no one they know would ever do anything like that. But, sexual offenders are usually not crazy in any way that shows, other than their willingness to use force. They may even be 'successful,' charming and well-liked. They may show anger when they don't get their way. Some are self-centered, me-oriented people. They have no sense that the needs of the other person should be considered. Of course, teens who use more 'acceptable' forms of pressure for sexual contact may not show even these characteristics.

Although the offenders in acquaintance rape and sexual exploitation are almost always male, women are involved in some child sexual assault and sexual exploitation. The older man and teen are so common as a romantic couple it almost goes unnoticed, but it is still sexual exploitation based on their inequality in experience and power. In the same way, the older woman/teen boy is exploitive.

THE SITUATION

Teens are exploited, taken advantage of and raped in everyday situations: dating, at friends' houses, partying, breaking rules, going to school and job hunting. They can be taken advantage of and trapped because of:

- their fear of getting into trouble,
- their inexperience and lack of information about sexuality,
- their own need along with outside pressure to enter the world of love and romance,
- the sheer numbers of new people in their lives,
- their trust of others and their willingness to think they have misunderstood another's intentions,
- their belief that if they are good, good things will happen to them; if bad things happen, they must have deserved it.

THE FORCE

Teens may well have heard that rape is a violent, not a sexual crime. But, teens are more likely to encounter rape in situations of sexual bargaining rather than in interactions which seem violent. They are most likely to be up against verbal pressure. Or in the case of acquaintance rape, verbal pressure followed by grabbing or shoving.

The difference between rape, sexual exploitation and consenting sex is how much, and what kind of pressure and force is used.

HOW DOES RAPE AFFECT A TEENAGER?

Although the tendency for both the teen and parent may be to underestimate the possible effects of forced sexual contact from someone known, its impact can be severe. Even when teenage victims realize they have been forced, they may not label what happened as rape. Many victims confuse their own submission (out of fear, guilt or confusion) with consent. Social isolation, bad feelings about themselves, inability to concentrate, difficulty in school and difficulty trusting others are possible effects.

These difficulties in school and with friends can create severe problems for teens that aren't easily handled by the teenager, his or her family or the community. In fact, sexual assault may be a factor in causing much troubled teenage behavior. Many teens involved in running away, prostitution, drug abuse, or suicide have been victims of sexual assault. The severity of the effects increases the importance of finding ways to help teens avoid acquaintance rape and child sexual assault.

Because acquaintance rape and sexual exploitation happen so often, in every community, to kids of all social classes, races, intelligence levels, ethnic and economic groups and because teens haven't been told "It's still rape even if you know the guy," it's important to provide them with information about sexual assault.

TALKING WITH TEENAGERS ABOUT ACQUAINTANCE RAPE

Parents want to protect their teens so much they sometimes use scare tactics to get them to listen. This approach usually backfires. Teenagers believe they can take care of themselves and want to be thought of as capable, so they're unlikely to believe anything bad could happen to them. However, few teens really understand acquaintance rape, or sexual assault: how it happens, who might do it or how they can realistically protect themselves.

One of the most useful methods a parent has is to tell a son or daughter specifically what she or he might encounter. They need more than "be careful," "don't get anyone in trouble," "don't trust strangers."

GETTING STARTED

1. DECIDE ON YOUR OWN DEFINITION OF RAPE

You may have defined sexual assault to your children already in terms of touching. "No one should touch you in a way which makes you feel uncomfortable." "No one should touch your private parts." But teens need more specific information. A definition for teens might be, "Sexual assault is *anyone* tricking or forcing another into sexual activity. It's least likely to be a stranger who does that."

The important pieces of the definition are *who* might do it, the *force* used and the *situations* in which it might happen.

2. THINK AHEAD ABOUT HOW TO DEAL WITH DISCOMFORT, BOTH YOURS AND YOUR TEENAGER'S.

• EMPHASIZE your desire to be helpful and RESOLVE not to use scare tactics.

"Our family rules are our attempt to protect you. If they don't work, we still want to help. I'm worried about acquaintance rape. I want to help you avoid it."

• PRESENT ideas as those you wish you had known when you were a teen.

"When I was growing up, my parents didn't talk about rape. They wanted to help, they just didn't know how. I wish I had known that it's still rape, even if you know the guy."

• ACCEPT vague answers rather than pressing for details.
That can sound like an interrogation.

• LISTEN to the answers.
Sometimes everybody is in such a hurry to talk, no one listens.

- TIME your discussions.

The teen getting ready to go out on a date is unlikely to listen if this is your first conversation about acquaintance rape. He or she may think the parent is only concerned about this date. Loyalty to the date will keep teens from understanding that what is being said applies anytime they go out with anyone. Teens will probably listen better at a more neutral time—shopping together, lunch, making dinner.

- PREPARE to respond in a way that keeps communication going.

"When my son, just home from a date, asked if I thought a girl 'owed' a guy sex because he had spent money on her, it was all I could do to keep from falling apart. I knew that wouldn't help, so I made myself a cup of tea and thought about my answer. When the tea was made, I was able to talk with him without losing my cool. I'll use that approach next time—give myself a moment before I jump into a heavy discussion."

WHAT TO SAY

An easy way to start is to find out what they already know:

"I'm sure you get lots of information at school (church, other groups). But I'm not sure what they tell you. "Have you ever had speakers at school about date rape, incest, or child abuse?"

"What's the scariest thing about going out on a first date with someone?"

"I know you'd rather I didn't worry about you, but I do. Have you thought about what you would do if someone you dated started to act like he or she didn't care what you wanted?"

If nothing else seems to work, and your teenager won't respond to any of your concerns, try:

"All right, it probably won't happen to you but just for my peace of mind, can we talk about what you might do if such and such (give examples) happens?"

- ASK questions about the situations they face.

"Do you and your friends ever talk about what they might do if a guy tried to force them to have sex? How much pressure do your friends think is okay to use? When might it be all right to use more than that?" (Parents need to know what ideas about force their teens already believe.)

A parent might explain what acquaintance rape or sexual exploitation is by saying:

"Acquaintance rape is when a guy holds a girl down and forces her to have intercourse. It's someone she knows—a date, friend of a friend, someone from school. It can happen because of the trust the girl has in the boy. She may really want him to like her, or she can't believe it's happening."

"They guy thinks he won't get into trouble. He counts on you not to make trouble. He gets you to share the blame or to feel like you asked for it so you won't tell anyone."

The force that is used might be explained this way:

- someone who tries to make you feel bad:
  "What's the matter, don't you like me?"
  "Don't tell me you're afraid of me."

- someone who pressures for sex:
  "I won't date you anymore."
  "If you loved me, you would."
- someone who does not take 'no' for an answer:
  "What do you mean 'no,' I spent all that money on you."
  "You really want it." "You're just saying 'no' to protect your reputation, girls are supposed to do that."
- someone who feels sex is his right:
  "You led me on." "You've turned me on. Now you have to."
  "We've had sex before; you can't say 'no' now."
- someone who uses emotional blackmail:
  "I'll commit suicide if you break up with me."

Parents want teens to be able to choose based on their own values, not to be pressured or forced or exploited.

WHAT IS CONSENT?

Consent is based on choice. Consent is active not passive. Consent is possible only when there is equal power. Giving in because of fear is not consent. Going along with something because of wanting to fit in with the group, being deceived or feeling bad is not consent. If you can't say 'no' comfortably, then 'yes' has no meaning. If you are unwilling to accept a 'no,' then 'yes' has no meaning.

USE EXAMPLES

Occasionally parents will have an opportunity to spend longer time talking. If so, giving teens specific examples may help them see parents' concerns. Many teens under 15 don't generalize well; they are still developing their ability to understand abstractions. Stories can help.

A good place to start is with general stories.

> "When a guy takes a girl out, he wants the girl to pay attention to him, not everybody else. Sometimes a girl will go out with a guy just to go out. But when they get around other guys, she flirts with them. The guy she went out with may feel angry or bad. What would you do if a girl did that to you?"

While this is not sexual exploitation, it is a common dating problem. Boys need to be taught how to deal with their feelings of rejection and anger over this kind of situation. One way to do that might be to help boys express their feelings and hurts. Or start a conversation by asking, "How do you handle rejection? Do you pretend it's no big deal? Do you tell yourself you didn't like her in the first place?"

"I always looked forward to summer camp. It was a great place to get to know other kids and experiment a little. One year one of my friends went further sexually with a boy there than she would have with someone at home. He promised he would be her boyfriend and wouldn't tell anyone. She thought he meant it. But he had friends who went to our school. When school started she heard rumors about herself, and that her 'boy friend' had gone back to his old girl friend."

When one person uses deception, such as lying or intimidation, to get sexual contact with another, it is sexual exploitation..
OR

"I remember a party that I went to when I was your age. There was a guy there that I didn't know, but some of the other kids did. He seemed interested in me. He came over to me and stood really close, as if he knew me well, and leaned so close that I felt pretty uncomfortable. I stayed close to my girl friend that night, because I wasn't sure what he was trying to do. I'm just telling you this because at some of the parties you go to someone may try to intimidate you or pressure you to do sexual things you don't want to do. Slapping a girl or telling her he will spread lies about her are examples of force he might use. Even guys you know well might do that."

Other related behaviors include: guys lining the school hallway calling out grades on girls' bodies, obscene phone calls, abusive jokes, pursuing someone relentlessly, or girls patting a boy's crotch.

"Another way someone may trick you is if you are on a date with a guy for the second time, and you think you like him but you aren't sure you trust him. He suggests you go park and then drives to a deserted spot where you feel unsafe. He has a lot more power than you and it's hard to continue to resist if he insists on sex."

Most sexual exploitation is based on verbal manipulation. Some people make others feel sorry for them or just somehow maneuver them into the spot where it seems like saying 'no' is really awful. "You would if you loved me" is pretty obvious but "Why are you here if you don't want to have sex with me?" is tougher to respond to without sounding foolish. And most of us, especially teens, don't like to sound foolish.

"When I was a teenager a friend of mine had been going out with the same boy for a long time. She really wanted to keep him because he was goodlooking and had a part-time job and was going to be successful. But he told her if she didn't have sex with him, he wouldn't be her boy friend anymore. She gave in, but she wasn't happy about it."

Parents can offer some concrete help. Teens who also understand they have their parents' support and backing will be less likely to be trapped into an assault.

PREVENTION IDEAS

NO-QUESTIONS-ASKED BAILOUTS

Sexual assaults often happen in situations where the victim feels stuck: no way out, no way home, no one to help. Parents can offer their teens no-questions-asked bailouts.

The following plan, originally suggested for teenage drinking, also works as a self-protective approach to acquaintance rape. Although teenagers may say they would never call their parents in these circumstances, the plan still provides an option and the idea that there may be others.

"If you are with a boy, at his house, let's say, and he refuses to drive you home until you go to bed with him and you're not supposed to be seeing this boy in the first place and you know I'm going to hit the roof, call me anyway. I will come get you, no questions asked. I promise not to embarrass you in front of him. If you promise to call, I promise not to say a word for a day, and then we will sit down and talk about it. It is more important that you have a way to protect yourself in that kind of situation than it is to worry about having broken a rule."

Because teenagers are risk-takers, it is most likely that they will feel at fault for what is happening. If, for instance, the risk a girl took was to break a family rule, then what she expects from a parent is anger and blame. The fact that teens have broken a family rule, disobeyed, been in the wrong place at the wrong time does not mean they deserve to be raped, even though they may feel that way. It's important to say to kids that even if they've broken a rule, or done something they shouldn't have, or been stupid, you still want to help keep them safe. It helps to distinguish between the consequences for breaking the rule,

> "You are responsible for the decision to let your friends into this house when you've been told it's not okay."

and the responsibility for the sexual assault.

> "I know you never expected something like that to happen. It was his choice to trick you. He is responsible for that."

TALKING ABOUT LIMITS AHEAD OF TIME

Teenagers who know their own limits are more likely to be able to avoid being exploited. If parents talk with their teens about sexual limits, teenagers will be more likely to find and set limits for themselves. Those teens will also be able to remember family ground rules and figure out how to stick to them, even in the backseat of a car, at a 'make-out' party or when alcohol or other drugs are involved.

EXAMPLES OF LIMITS

These vary from family to family. These are examples of the kinds of limits families can talk about:

- group outings only until age 16
- no sexual intercourse before marriage
- no sexual intercourse before you are at least 16
- never use pressure or force to get sex
- if you do have sex, you must use birth control
- no going steady until 15 or older; instead, 'play the field' and learn about people
- in our family when someone says to stop touching them, we stop
- you can say 'no' to touching you don't like anywhere, anytime; you don't need to give a reason

Most parents have strong feelings and concerns about adolescent sexual behavior. Communicating those concerns and feelings to teens is part of a parent's job. Most kids would consider their parents' wishes, if they only knew what they were. *They want guidelines.*

> "I talked to my 15-year-old daughter because of my concern. I told her that friends and dates will sometimes try to take advantage of her by pressuring her for more sex than she is ready for. I felt a bit awkward, and I think she did too, but she listened. I wanted her to know that she could decide she was ready for more sexual contact, and then later change her mind. It was a start and I think she benefited."

Even though many adolescents are sexually active, most wait at least until they're 17 or 18. Half delay even longer. They all need our support for resisting pressures to have sex before they're ready. Pressures vary from simple peer pressure to overt force.

> "Remember that girl at summer camp who had sex with a boy and then he told everybody. After that everybody at school wanted to take her out. I want you to know that just because a girl or boy says 'yes' once doesn't mean they have to keep saying 'yes.' "

"My 16-year-old son came home from a party, looking troubled. I asked him what was wrong, and his response was, "Mom, tell me again why I shouldn't do it? (I knew 'it' meant sexual intercourse because we had already talked about it.)"

"I'm not sure most of my reasons for wanting her to avoid adding sex to a relationship will be convincing, but I know I don't want her to be taken advantage of—she's too young to be that involved in a relationship."

Some other ideas to help teens set limits and resist pressure are these:

- You don't have to have sex to get or keep a relationship.
- If he threatens you to try to get sex, he doesn't care that much about you.
- Sex should never be a test of love.

Be specific. Teens will understand better and remember more.

"When you and a boy go past necking, which usually means hugging and kissing, he might try to touch your breasts or put his hand under your clothes. Some people call that petting. That's a new place for you to decide whether you will continue or stop."

Teens need to hear parents say that pushing, manipulating, pressuring, exploiting, or abusing another person is not acceptable. They also need to hear the 'other side,' that nurturing, non-exploitive relationships are more pleasant and rewarding. We sometimes hesitate to set limits, not wanting to be the 'bad guy,' but parental limits and ground rules are one way parents have of protecting their children. And, experts say, our children feel loved when we set limits.

GROUP PSYCHOLOGY

Parents may believe teens are less likely to be victimized if they go to parties or on group dates instead of on single dates. But group events and parties have their own hazards because of pressures the group can bring.

Everyone has experienced times when standing up for what she/he believed in seemed to go against the grain of what 'everybody else' seemed to want to do. Being different is hard, especially when people ask, "What's the matter, are you chicken or something?" It's tough to do what you know is right when friends are doing something else.

As part of talking about group pressures, a description of group or gang psychology may help teens identify a dangerous situation early enough to avoid it.

Everyone has heard of gang rapes, some occurring in public places. People in crowds feel anonymous. They somehow sense that they won't really be held responsible for what is done—it was someone else's fault, or somebody else started it. Some say they were afraid not to go along with the group.

Both girls and boys need to be told about this influence on people. Girls are most likely to be victimized. Boys need to be aware so that they are not victimized either directly or by going along with something they will be ashamed of later.

Teens will have difficulty admitting their friends could take part in any activity like this. The lesson to teach isn't "don't trust your friends," but rather, "be aware that even people you trust can, under some circumstances, take advantage of the friendship."

One mother's strategy to help counter this pressure was to suggest to her teens that they can be the leader in setting a new direction for the group. She says, "Most of your friends are neat people. If you are uncomfortable with the situation, they probably are too."

In a group, everybody has more at stake than in a one-on-one situation. A boy may be worried about not getting as far as his friends, or that his friends will tease him about letting a girl talk him out of anything. Parties can turn from friendly get-togethers to 'makeout' sessions and become set-ups for sexual assault with only a few leading the way. Teens need several strategies for avoiding victimization both before and during group situations.

YOU MIGHT SUGGEST THESE GUIDELINES TO YOUR TEEN

BEFORE A GROUP SITUATION

- Maintain your choices by having your own car or transportation, or knowing you can call your parents.
- Pay attention to how your feelings change. A situation may seem all right at first, but then become uncomfortable.
- Be prepared for pressure if dating a guy who has a reputation for scoring.
- Decide what you'll do if she/he starts to pressure you for more sexual contact than you're ready for or when you aren't interested.
- Practice making choices about what you want. It is easier to avoid being taken advantage of in a group situation if you have practiced in other situations, such as stopping friends who take advantage in little ways. (Is it fair that he always uses your notes? She borrows your clothes?)

DURING A GROUP SITUATION

- Walk and act confidently; look directly at people. If you don't look afraid, others may be less likely to pick on you.
- Just continue to do whatever you are doing and get through the situation.
- Appeal to a friend who is part of the group for help.
- Know how much discomfort and fear are normal for you at parties and social gatherings, and how much means it isn't an okay situation after all and it's time to leave. Your friends may laugh and you may be afraid you will get into trouble at home but you should listen to your feelings if they are telling you that you would rather not be there.
- If there is any physical violence, leave without question.
- If desperate, be prepared to be outrageous: break a window, call attention to the situation, ring the doorbell, turn the music way up or off.

TALKING ABOUT ATTITUDES

When the various attitudes held about sexual assault are examined, it is not surprising that sexual assault happens so much. Teenagers, especially, have confused notions about rape—why it happens and who's responsible.

A UCLA survey asked teenagers: "Under what circuamstances is it okay for a boy to hold a girl down and force her to have sexual intercourse?" Eighty-two percent of the male and female teens responded that there were never any circumstances in which using force was okay. When asked about the following specific circumstances, however, many of them changed their minds.

IS IT OKAY FOR A BOY TO HOLD A GIRL DOWN AND FORCE HER TO HAVE SEXUAL INTERCOURSE IF:

	Percent Answering No	
	F	M
he spends a lot of money on her?	88%	61%
he is so turned on he can't stop?	79%	64%
she has had intercourse with other boys?	82%	61%
she is stoned or drunk?	82%	61%
she lets him touch her above the waist?	72%	61%
she says she's going to have sex with him, then changes her mind?	69%	46%
they have dated a long time?	68%	57%
she's led him on?	73%	46%
she gets him sexually excited?	58%	49%

Only 34 percent of teens said that force was not acceptable in any of these circumstances. Force was seen as most acceptable "when a girl gets a guy sexually excited" and least "when a guy spends a lot of money on a girl." A much larger percentage of the girls as compared to the boys rejected the use of force under all of the circumstances.

Yet, all of the conditions describe a rape!

This study also surveyed what teens conclude about each other from their dress. The survey indicated that some teens consider that a girl wearing certain types of clothing is declaring her availability for sex. Boys' dress was not viewed as saying anything about availability. Parents of boys can help change this miscommunication by pointing out to their sons that the clothes girls wear (just as the clothes boys wear) are more related to the whims of fashion, personal comfort and the need to be "looking good" than a statement of sexual availability.

Also, it seems that despite their apparent sophistication, teens today still believe in traditional sex role stereotypes and expect the male to be the aggressor and the female to be the limit-setter. Some argue that these stereotypes set the scene for acquaintance rape.

One of the most prevalent attitudes among teens about rape, however, is that the victims are to blame. Teens will often say, "Yes, but she brought it on herself, she deserved it," because:

- she should have known better,
- she knew he tried to 'score' with everyone he dates,
- she's got a bad reputation anyway,
- she went to his house when no one was home,
- she didn't fight back,
- she knew there were drugs at that party,
- she knew what would happen,
- she's no virgin.

Attitudes are important to discuss with teenagers. Blaming the victim excuses sexual assault and perpetuates our acceptance of it. Teens are busy sorting out all the roles they can play. Parents can talk about those that are a set-up for acquaintance rape and exploitation.

One way to start a discussion might be to ask your daughter what expectations she has about boys' dating behavior or ask your son what expectations he has from a girl on a date. Or ask if they see any of the sex role expectations and stereotypes as harmful. Is it fair that boys are supposed to always want sex? Is it fair that girls are always responsible for what happens sexually?

"My son came home one day, slamming his way through the front hall saying he wasn't going to ask one more girl anything. I knew he'd been planning to ask a girl he found attractive to the school dance. I felt helpless because it isn't fair that he always has to risk rejection. On the other hand, I see too many boys who develop an 'I'm going to get her' attitude because of it."

RESPECT AND ENCOURAGE FRIENDSHIPS

A boy and girl who view each other as friends are much less likely to take advantage of or exploit the other. Friendships can provide fun and affection and help teens be less dependent on dates for their sense of worth and belonging.

To encourage friendships parents can:

- Invite friends of both sexes along on family outings.
- Help create alternative groups to the 'in-group,' when needed, with activities like going for pizza, having a foosball or pool table in the basement, or giving a ride to the movies.

- Set the standard that plans with friends are not changed just because a boy or girl called and suddenly asked for a date.
- Demonstrate with your own friends how one values and takes care of friendships.
- Include in the family circle people who are friends with both parents or with the parent of the other sex.
- Assume a boy and girl are friends, not romantic interests, until told otherwise.
- Ask questions about friends just as one might about a romantic interest. "What do you two like to do together?" "Does she (or he) have brothers or sisters?"

Parents who want their children to experience cross-sex and same sex friendships are working against strong societal influences. They need to provide their children extra support and preparation for being different. Teens who have good friends, and know how to be friends with both sexes are much less vulnerable to pressures to exploit another.

COMMUNITY VALUES

Community activities and organizations, such as religious, cultural and ethnic groups, sports, grange, Y's, and athletic clubs, provide parents and children with information about community values. When parents and children participate together they can discuss those values: which are useful, which parents disagree with, which teens disagree with, and what others seem to be deciding about those values.

These activities teach teamwork, community cooperation, sportsmanship, self-discipline, and specific achievement as well as respect and caring for others. Parents who talk with their teens about these activities can encourage respect for other people and discourage values that promote exploitation and violence.

These activities can also counteract the images portrayed in the media. Teens who are out in the world participating in sports, music, art lessons, fairs, and so on, know that the real world isn't like the world portrayed in the media.

MEDIA MESSAGES

"Buy these jeans, you'll be gorgeous and popular! This makeup makes you beautiful! If you are beautiful then everyone will love you! If you are macho and handsome, women will want you! Drink beer, it's fun! Real men are tough! Women love being roughed up once in a while!" The list could go on—and most teenagers could add to it. They recognize some of the world of media hype and fantasy for what it is. But the media is a problem because of both the power and the content of its messages. It affects viewers whether or not they realize it.

What are teens really learning? Media messages can increase a teenager's confusion about sexuality: Am I okay—Even if I'm not: seductive, macho, white, pretty, handsome, rich?

Discussion Starter: *Brainstorm with your kids the subtle (and not so subtle) messages from TV ads like "the human body is smelly and unclean," and "ring around the collar is a social disaster," "girls love guys who ride motorcycles."*

One of the media's worst aspects is its frequent linking of sex and violence. There are ads and rock videos which feature women who are tied down, physically threatened, being hit. There are TV shows in which characters fall in love with persons who raped them. Or TV shows in which the sexy male and female detective team shoot the bad guy dead, and congratulate each other with a long kiss, standing over the body—gun still in hand.

The media knows two things that sell: sex and violence. What are kids learning? That violence is sexy? That sex usually involves violence?

Messages about sex and violence don't have to be subtle at all. Pornography is abusive, degrading, dominating sexual material aimed at selling a product or to entertain. Years ago it was rare for teens to have easy access to pornography—at the very least, they had to leave their home to see it. Now any home with cable TV can subscribe to soft-core pornography channels. Many families have video machines and can rent videos on any subject. Pornographic magazines are available at the corner drug store and grocery.

There are four times as many pornographic bookstores in the U.S. as there are McDonald's restaurants

WHAT CAN I DO?

Teens aren't getting the information they need. Study after study has shown that even though teenagers appear to be more sophisticated than their parents were as kids, they have little accurate information about positive, healthy sexuality. The media feeds their confusion.

Parents can make the difference between kids being confused by the mixed messages and the kids who have enough information to sort out the garbage. The media has the greatest influence when the teenage viewer is least informed. Teens with no other source of information about attractiveness, sex and rape will depend on the media more than teens with other resources. To lessen the impact, parents can provide their kids with accurate information. We can't change the whole world tomorrow, nor can we remove the media's influence entirely, but we can provide a positive, healthy, alternative message.

WHAT CAN I SAY?

Again, one way to encourage communication is to find out what they already know. In one survey, most teens defined pornography as movies, books, photos or magazines with sex or nudity. Only a few said: exploiting someone, children posing for nude pictures, flaunting the human body, portraying sex in a vulgar way, selling sex or other responses showing an understanding that pornography mixes violence, exploitation, abuse and degradation with sex.

When starting a discussion about something as difficult as pornography, it's easier to start with a definition. Obviously, not all sexually explicit material is pornographic. For most people, it is pornography if there is abuse, degradation, exploitation and violence portrayed.

Research indicates that the more people watch images of violence, the more likely they are to use violence and the more hardened they become to it. A study found that college age men who viewed pornographic films that blended sex and violence tended to be more aroused by the idea of rape and less sympathetic to the victims than men who hadn't seen such films. They state that "even one exposure to violence in pornography can significantly influence erotic reactions to the portrayal of rape."

Why this confusion about the role of pornography? Marie Fortune, in SEXUAL VIOLENCE, outlines the problem this way:
The traditional views of pornography:

CONSERVATIVE	**LIBERAL**
Sex = bad	Sex = good
Pornography = sex	Pornography = sex
Pornography = bad	Pornography = good

What's the problem here? SEX IS NOT EQUAL TO PORNOGRAPHY.

HOW DO I START?

Our goals should be to help our teens understand the difference between pornography (abusive sex) and erotica (consensual, equal sex). When they are exposed to images of sexual violence on record album covers, in music, etc., we want them to be able to choose. They should be able to look at it and say "This is not cool because. . ." This is gross because. . ."

Part of the problem in helping them to reach this level of understanding is that they need a positive message of sexuality if they are in fact to have a choice. The media, unfortunately, doesn't offer much, but parents can.

"I liked that movie. It showed guys and girls caring for each other as friends."

"These are nice photos. They show men and women as ordinary, but still okay, attractive people."

"I recently found my 13-year-old daughter at home listening to some records that had the most awful album covers. Something involving women in chains, nearly nude, being hurt, bleeding and of course loving it. I told my daughter that I couldn't abide that kind of message about women in the house and to dispose of it. She thought I was going off the deep end. She said she knew the cover was crummy and that I wasn't being fair. I thought she got rid of it, but later I found it hidden. I realize now, I was asking her to do better than I do. Plenty of my magazines have objectionable ads and I don't cancel my subscription."

"I found I was making some rules about TV my kids refused to keep. I still felt strongly but I tried another tack. Now sometimes when they are home dancing in front of the videos on the TV, I join them. We talk about the stuff on the video. How people think it's cool to treat girls like sex objects and boys act like all they want is sex. Although some of it is pretty awful stuff, we've been able to see how ridiculous it is and laugh at it."

The most effective approach may be to talk with your kids about what you think about various media messages. For example:

"I don't like that magazine. I think the overall message is that men have to conquer women."

"I don't like the way the women in that magazine are all in silly poses for men to stare at them like they are pieces of meat."

"I don't think ads should use children in sexual poses to sell jeans. It's not right to make people think that children are available to them sexually."

These statements are also useful discussion starters.

MOM: I was reading in the paper this morning that the movie PORKY'S was a multimillion dollar hit. You saw that movie, didn't you?

SON: Yeah, I went last summer with Jo, remember?

MOM: What did you think of it?

SON: It was okay.

MOM: The paper also said that it was a film which showed girls as sex objects for people to stare at through holes in the locker room walls. That it kind of treated girls like they were in two categories: fat ugly ones you can be real cruel to, or gorgeous sex objects. It said the girls didn't have names or feelings or friendships like the boys did.

SON: It's just a movie, Mom! Why do you take it so seriously?

MOM: Because media messages are very powerful. They can influence how you feel about girls and about sex. Did you know a lot of people think it's okay to act that way?

SON: Not me, I'm not affected by that stuff.

MOM: How do you know you're not affected? How did Jo feel about it? Was she uncomfortable?

Even if parents are not sure what to think about some of these issues, you can still talk about them. Nobody has all the answers. The key is to keep the dialogue open.

> *"Our girls found a* Playboy *on our bookshelves that a visiting relative had left. I suggested they bring it to a family meeting so we could talk about it. They had a lot of questions, some of which I couldn't really answer, like: 'Why are there only women? Don't they feel silly posing like that? Is this pornography? What's wrong with it?' Now they want to see a* Playgirl *to see if the men are posed in the same way. I did end up having a good talk about it with them. I reassured them that their sense of embarrassment was valid—that it wasn't the nudity, it was the way they were posed. I told them I was bothered, too, and that I thought it was sad. I told them that no women really look that way—that the photos are touched up, and that the women got paid for posing but that it was a hard way to earn money."*

Parents can turn the media into an active tool for learning. They can encourage their children to think about what it is they are seeing and hearing.

TEENS AT RISK

Who are the teens who commit sexual assaults? Imagining our children's friends as 'rapists' is not easy to do. ("But he's such a nice boy.") Adolescent offenders, as described by treatment programs, come from every kind of neighborhood.

The question, "What causes sexual assault?" has not yet been answered. Several factors have been suggested, all of which probably have some influence. Knowing these factors and learning to trust your own judgment and suspicions provide the best clues to who might commit a sexual assault.

1. Boys and girls who have been sexually or physically abused seem to be more likely to commit a sexual assault.

2. Emotional abuse, pressure to achieve and failure seem to be factors. Teens who commit sexual assaults often come from families where communication and affection are disrupted.

PERSONAL SPACE

When warning bells go off telling us that someone is invading our 'personal space,' they are easy to ignore. None of us wants to believe our friends may exploit us, and usually people mean us no harm. But it is helpful for teens to know that this behavior can also be the first 'test' used in a gradual buildup to a sexual assault.

Examples are when someone:

- stands or sits too close,
- is touching you all the time,
- touches your breasts 'by accident,'
- stares at you,
- stares at the sexual parts of your body.

Some teens who commit sexual assault are achievers. They may have a part-time job, participate in extracurricular activities, and do well at school. These teens show no empathy toward their victims. They are only sorry about being caught because of the trouble that creates for them. Questions this suggests are:

Does the young man show empathy toward others or consistently view someone else as to blame for his problems?

Does he worry only about getting into trouble?

3. Teens who participate in delinquent activities, who are very loyal to a delinquent peer group, who don't care about school and family, or who have a high number of family crises are more likely to commit a sexual assault. Parents could say something like:

"You know kids who don't care about their family or school are more likely to mistreat the people they date or run around with."

"People who ignore rules about drugs or school or alcohol sometimes think they don't have to obey the rules about how to treat other people. Sometimes they are aggressive just because they know they can get away with it."

Abuse and delinquency may be related in that some abused children turn to delinquent peer groups.

4. Society, through media such as records, movies and advertising condones acquaintance rape. The line between 'seducton' and rape is rarely drawn.

To be sure teens understand how hard it is to identify a friend or acquaintance who might sexually assault them, parents also need to talk about the possibility that nice boys or goodlooking boys might use force to gain sexual contact. Parents could point out this problem by saying:

"Sometimes people who are really popular, a star at school, or much older, think they have the right to tell you what to do. Is there anyone at your school like that?"

It's helpful for you to be able to recognize when someone doesn't care about your feelings. The feeling of being ignored, or treated like an object, may be a good clue that a person will exploit you. For instance someone who:

- ignores what you say,
- talks over you, as though you're not there,
- pretends not to hear you,
- does what he wants regardless of what you want,
- is hostile when you don't go along with him.

5. Boys are raised to push for sex, girls to resist. Some have suggested this is an obvious set-up for acquaintance rape.

Treatment programs focus on:

- Gaining family participation and communication, especially about sexual values and relationships.
- Providing clear limits on aggressive behavior while providing new methods for handling frustration.
- Developing social skills to lessen the sense of powerlessness.

Perhaps the question we need to ask is why some men don't rape. Even men who agree with some 'rape attitudes' are unwilling to use force or coercion themselves.

Another inevitable question is, are some children more at risk of being assaulted?

The answer seems to be that while no one set of characteristics excludes risk, some do seem to increase it. Those are a high number of family crises, belonging to a delinquent peer group, and sadly, a previous sexual assault.

The added risk to a child who has been sexually assaulted is the reason a short section on recovery has been included in this booklet. Teens who receive the support and help of their parents are going to be better able to recover and put their life in order.

RECOVERY INFORMATION

Teens usually don't tell their parents about an assault because of fear of upsetting their parents, loyalty to the offender, the circumstances of the assault, rule breaking, or blaming themselves. They are more likely to tell their friends. Parents who learn of an assault can help if you first tell your teen:

"I believe you."

"I'm glad you told me."

"It's not your fault."

"I'll do my best to protect you."

Then, as circumstances require:

1. Provide reassurance to the teen about her or his ability to take care of her or himself while providing safety and comfort (nightlight, extra door checks, comforting after nightmares).

2. Help teen receive basic medical care while respecting the need for privacy between the doctor and teen.

3. Assist in deciding about police reporting and possible legal proceedings. Although you can help, the teen must live with the consequences and needs to be in control of the final decision.

4. Remember your concerns as a parent are very different from your teen's.

5. Confirm the teen's perception of the assault. Some offenders call for another date. A teen may think she/he overreacted somehow. Parents can confirm that it is hurtful to be forced; that isn't what sex is about any more than being force fed is what eating is about.

6. If the situation involved any behavior the teen might feel guilty about, reassure her or him that everyone makes mistakes, but in this case the offender is at fault for taking advantage of the situation and using force, pressure, deception, trickery or teen vulnerability.

7. Reassure the teen through appropriate touching and words that she/he is still loved and valued as much as ever.

8. Help find knowledgeable professional help to speed the recovery process. Your local rape crisis center may be able to provide help directly or assist in locating it.

9. Assist in the resolution of a possible crisis in religious faith. Do not be shocked or condemning of the teen's reaction, but help her or him find a sympathetic ear to help resolve the crisis.

10. Recognize and seek help for your own crisis caused by the teen's assault. Most parents experience a sense of terrible failure if their teen is victimized. They often have done everything they knew how to protect their child. The crisis is normal, and seeking help will allow you to be of more asssistance to your child and help everyone's recovery.